AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1-5.   (Cancelled)

6.   (Currently Amended) A method for ranking records of a database located during a search of an index to the database performed in response to a query, the index having a plurality of index entries, each index entry having a weight, the method comprising the steps of:

scoring each located record according to the number of times portions of information corresponding to query terms occur in each record and the weight of each index entry corresponding to occurring query terms;

storing the score and an identifier of each located record in a respective entry of a ranking list; and

in response to having searched a portion of the index, determining if any records yet to be located may achieve a score that is higher than the score of any of the records already located and stored in the ranking list based upon query terms corresponding to index entries having a low weight, wherein the low weight is a weight corresponds to the weight of the index entry having the lowest weight of the portion of the index searched less than a high weight, and if not, searching the index using query terms corresponding to index entries having weights higher than the low weight.

7.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, wherein the ranking list has a limit on the number of entries stored therein.

8.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, wherein each index

entry has a word entry corresponding to a unique portion of information of the database, further comprising the step of:

assigning the weight to each index entry according to a difference between the number of records indexed and the number of records including the unique portion of information corresponding to the word entry of the index entry.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of:

ordering the entries of the ranking list according to the scores.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of:

providing information associated with each located record to a user in the order of the ranking list.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10, wherein the provided information associated with each located record is the score of each located record.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10, wherein the provided information associated with each located record is the identifier of each located record.

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Currently Amended) A system for ranking records of a database located during a search of an index to the database performed in response to a query, the index having a plurality of index entries, each index entry having a weight, the system

comprising:

at least one processor configured to score each located record according to the number of times portions of information corresponding to query terms occur in each record and the weight of each index entry corresponding to occurring query terms; and

at least one memory configured to store the score and an identifier of each located record in a respective entry of a ranking list;

wherein, in response to having searched a portion of the index, the at least one processor is also configured to determine if any records yet to be located may achieve a score that is higher than the score of any of the records already located and stored in the ranking list based upon query terms corresponding to index entries having a low weight, wherein the low weight is a weight less than a high weight corresponds to the weight of the index entry having the lowest weight of the portion of the index searched, and if not, search the index using query terms corresponding to index entries having weights higher than the low weight.

16.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15, wherein the ranking list has a limit on the number of entries stored therein.

17.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15, wherein each index entry has a word entry corresponding to a unique portion of information of the database, wherein the at least one processor is also configured to assign the weight to each index entry according to a difference between the number of records indexed and the number of records including the unique portion of information corresponding to the word entry of the index entry.

18.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15, wherein the at least

one processor is also configured to order the entries of the ranking list according to the

scores.

19.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 18, wherein the at least

one processor is also configured to provide information associated with each located

record to a user in the order of the ranking list.

20.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 19, wherein the

provided information associated with each located record is the score of each located

record.

21.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 19, wherein the

provided information associated with each located record is the identifier of each located

record.

22.   (Currently Amended) A system for ranking records of a database

located during a search of an index to the database performed in response to a query, the

index having a plurality of index entries, each index entry having a weight, the system

comprising:

means for scoring each located record according to the number of times

portions of information corresponding to query terms occur in each record and the weight

of each index entry corresponding to occur ing query terms;

means for storing the score and an identifier of each located record in a

respective entry of a ranking list; and

means for determining, in response to having searched a portion of the

index, if any records yet to be located may achieve a score that is higher than the score of

any of the records already located and stored in the ranking list based upon query terms

corresponding to index entries having a low weight, wherein the low weight is ~~a weight less than a high weight~~ corresponds to the weight of the index entry having the lowest weight of the portion of the index searched; and

means for searching the index using query terms corresponding to index entries having weights higher than the low weight if no records yet to be located may achieve a score that is higher than the score of any of the records already located and stored in the ranking list based upon query terms corresponding to index entries having the low weight.

23.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 22, wherein the means for scoring comprises at least one processor.

24.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 22, wherein the means for storing comprises at least one memory.

25.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 22, wherein the means for determining comprises at lt one processor.

26.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 22, wherein the means for searching comprises at least one processor.

27.   (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium storing executable instructions thereon, the instructions when read by a processing device are operative to:

a memory device having executable instructions stored therein; and

a processing device coupled to and receiving the executable instructions therefrom, the processing device, in response to the executable instructions, is operative to:

score each located record according to the number of times portions of information corresponding to query terms occur in each record and the weight of each index entry corresponding to occurring query terms;

store the score and an identifier of each located record in a respective entry of a ranking list; and

in response to having searched a portion of the index, determine if any records yet to be located may achieve a score that is higher than the score of any of the records already located and stored in the ranking list based upon query terms corresponding to index entries having a low weight, wherein the low weight is a weight less then a high weight corresponds to the weight of the index entry having the lowest weight of the portion of the index searched, and if not, search the index using query terms corresponding to index entries having weights higher than the low weight.